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SITUATION REPORTS - COLOMBIA

1. Report prepared on 11 December 1961

a. The National Revolutionary Movement had hoped to stir up serious street disturbances on the arrival of President Kennedy in Bogota. However, these plans will be hampered because almost all members of the Department of Administrative Security (DAS) in Bogota have been assigned to securing the personal safety of the President. Suspicious leftists will be rounded up before the President's arrival.

b. General Gustavo ROJAS Pinilla has issued orders to the National Popular Alliance (ANP) to study the possibility of assembling 10,000 ROJAS sympathizers at El Dorado Airport, the American Embassy, or the American Embassy residence to welcome President Kennedy. The crowd is to shout "vivas" to President Kennedy and ROJAS and "abajo" to the oligarchy. Some members of the National Command of the ANP are opposing the demonstration, because they feel it would be prejudicial to the ANP. Proponents of the demonstration believe it would be beneficial because it would be an obvious expression of sentiment by the people that President Kennedy should not support the oppressive oligarchy.

c. A zone committee of the Communist Party of Colombia (PCC) in Bogota will hold a meeting on 14 or 15 December to effect distribution of 5,000 leaflets calling attention to President Kennedy's visit. Presumably, the leaflets will be in derogation of President Kennedy personally or of the GOC.

d. Because there will be a large group of U.S. police, FBI agents, Colombian police, detectives and soldiers in Bogota, the PCC has decided that demonstrations would not be to the advantage of the PCC. The PCC has decided to hold meetings in public squares, streets and factories to give the Party opinion on the significance of the President's visit.

e. The director of Prensa Latina (PL) in Bogota and representatives of the Communist Youth of Colombia (UJCC) printed leaflets to incite members of the UJCC to create disturbances in the bull ring and the football stadium on 10 December. Placards and banners were to be displayed. The National Police have the PL office under surveillance and have restricted admittance to the office to 3 persons.

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f. On 10 December, a Communist who was carrying Communist propaganda was arrested by the National Police near the football stadium.

g. [REDACTED]
concern about the ability of the security forces to protect adequately President Kennedy when [REDACTED] the President will go from El Dorado Airport to El Techo by car rather than by air, as originally planned. [REDACTED] security planning would be complicated because more land distance would have to be covered and would tax the security forces. To help solve the problem the Colombian Government is planning to build a new road between the airports to lessen the distance between them.

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

h. The 8 December edition of El Tiempo gave favorable comment to President Kennedy's trip and the Alliance for Progress. The 9 December press commented enthusiastically on President Kennedy's visit. The press expressed apprehension over possible incidents in Caracas but said the simpatico feeling for President Kennedy in Colombia as well as special security precautions will preclude trouble in Bogota. The 10 December press and radio were occupied with Colombia's break of diplomatic relations with Cuba. The media supported the break citing CASTRO's insulting Colombia as widespread indignation and support for the break. President LLERAS said that President Kennedy's visit is an opportunity for the Colombian people to show appreciation and regard for the people of the United States. The 10 December press discussed security arrangements which have been taken and have been previewed by Pierre Salinger and Richard Goodwin. Continued favorable comment although some indication disappointment at brevity of visit. El Siglo mentioned the security precautions being taken to meet possible activities by CASTRO supporters in the wake of the break of diplomatic relations. Radio comments are favorable. The Voz de la Democracia, Communist newspaper, denounced President Kennedy's visit as an inspection tour to a puppet government and discourages participation in "welcome organized by oligarchy."

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2. Report prepared on 12 December 1961

a. An official Colombian Government statement which appeared in the 11 December issue of El Siglo suggested a warning to those who would plan hostile action during President Kennedy's visit but appeared as a mandate for the people to welcome the President. The announcement said that the state of siege is still in effect, but guaranteed the public the right to peaceful participation in the coming political campaigns. The statement specified that strict jail sentences would be enforced for those causing disorders.

b. According to the 11 December issue of Vanguardia Liberal, of Bucaramanga, Alfonso LOPEZ Michelsen, head of the Liberal Revolutionary Movement (MRL), changed the international policy of the MRL with respect to the United States. In a speech at the MRL convention in Bucaramanga, LOPEZ was emphatic in calling the Alliance for Progress an admirable step. Following LOPEZ's endorsement of Alliance for Progress a proposal declaring President Kennedy persona non grata was rejected.

c. Fidel CASTRO's provocation for a break in diplomatic relations between Colombia and Cuba was seen as an attempt to disrupt President Kennedy's visit. All major media are in full support of the Colombian Government's position. Media quoted leaders of industry, labor, the Church, and professions as supporting the Government action. Leftist reaction to the break was slow as evidenced by the long silence of Alfonso LOPEZ Michelsen, leader of the MRL, before his statement acknowledging CASTRO's provocation but interpreting the break in relations as weakening the Colombian Government's authority and uncommitted position at the Council of Ministers meeting.

d. The Bogota and provincial papers report that security preparations for President Kennedy's visit have been completed. The papers report that no disturbances are expected. El Espectador reports preparations have been made for an "unprecedented public welcome" for President Kennedy. Official, semi-official, and private sources report receiving numerous requests in organizing a welcome for the President. Large gatherings are anticipated at Ciudad Techo, a self-help development project, which President Kennedy will inaugurate and along the entire route into Bogota. Delegations from outlying provinces are expected to participate in the welcome.

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3. Report prepared on 13 December 1961

a. Activities of the Department of Administrative Security (DAS).

[REDACTED] travel into Bogota from other areas of Colombia has been normal. The DAS is attempting to check the travel of extremists. [REDACTED] disturbances, other than the distribution of propaganda, will take place during President Kennedy's visit.

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b. Activities of the National Police.

[REDACTED]

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

On 10 December at the bull ring in Bogota, the National Police dispersed a group of about 15 Communist/Castro agitators who were attempting to cause a disturbance.

c.

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Communist youth and labor unions were organizing activities to protest the visit of President Kennedy. The members of the committee were told to hold spontaneous pro-CASTRO, anti-US/Colombian Government meetings in the most congested pedestrian areas of Bogota on 9 December.

1.5(c)
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